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ABSTRACT

At Miami-Dade Community College's South Campus (SC), the Transition Center (TC) provides special advisement services for older students returning to school. In fall 1987, a study was conducted to develop a profile of the students served by the center and compare them with other South Campus students. Study findings, based on academic and demographic data on 211 center clients, included the following: (1) the average age of TC clients was 34.4 years, compared to 23.7 years for other SC students; (2) 85% were enrolled part time, compared to 63% of the remaining SC students; (3) only 43% of TC clients were graduates of Florida high schools, and 17% were General Educational Development recipients; (4) 23% had grade point averages of 3.50 or above, compared to 11% of the other SC students; (5) 60% of the TC clients and 34% of the SC students were white, non-Hispanic, including 48% of the TC clients and 19% of the SC students who were white females; (6) 93% of the TC clients had prior postsecondary educational experience, with 83% having previously enrolled at Miami-Dade; and (7) TC clients declared themselves as degree seekers in about the same proportion as other SC students. (AJL)

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COMING BACK TO SCHOOL: A PROFILE OF FALL TERM 1987 TRANSITION CENTER STUDENTS

Research Report No. 88-01

January 1988

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COMING BACK TO SCHOOL:

A PROFILE OF FALL TERM 1987 TRANSITION CENTER STUDENTS

Introduction

Miami-Dade Community College provides special advisement services for older students returning to school. On the South Campus, this effort is called the Transition Center. In the Spring of 1987, the Coordinator of the Transition Center expressed an interest in conducting research on the students advised by the Center. After discussion with and support from the South Campus Academic Dean, the District office of Institutional Research agreed to conduct a study profiling students advised at the Center for the 1987 Fall Term. It was also hoped that enough first-time-in-college students would be advised during the term to provide a data base for longitudinal follow-up.

Method

The Transition Center provided Institutional Research with encounter sheets on individuals advised from June through September of 1987. These sheets contained the advisee's name, social security number, and, when available, student number. Where student numbers were not recorded, Institutional Research staff searched social security number files to see if a student number existed. Nine individuals had no student number, and three had non-credit student numbers only. The 334 usable encounter sheet entries were placed onto a mainframe data base, and unduplicated to yield 287 unique student numbers (e.g. some students had more than one encounter sheet). These were then matched against a Fall Term demographic research file created in November, 1987. The total number of transition center advisees found registered for the Fall Term was 211. Basic descriptive data were gathered on this group, and compared to the remaining South Campus population.

All of the data are presented in Table 1 at the end of this narrative. In each case, Transition Center student data are displayed on the left side of the page, and South Campus data on the right. A percentage distribution is provided for the descriptive data. Three averages are also given for the breakdowns within the descriptive data categories-- the mean credits, mean grade point average (GPA), and mean age for students in each subgroup.

Results

Highlights of the data from Table 1 are given below. Since not all of the data are discussed here, the reader is encouraged to refer to the Table for comparisons that may be of special interest.

Age. The Transition Center group represents an older population. Their average age is 34.4 compared to 23.7 years old for other South Campus students. The students 30 years old or younger from the Transition Center carried a lighter credit load than South Campus students of the same age. However, sixty percent of Transition Center students were over 30 years of age compared to only 14% of the remaining South Campus students. These older Transition Center students carried a heavier credit load than their same aged counterparts on South Campus. Students in the over 30 age groups in general (Transition Center as well as other South Campus students) showed fewer than 7 credits registered per student on the average. This indicates that older students are more likely to enroll on a part-time basis.

Full/Part-Time Status. Since the Transition Center group is heavily weighted toward older students, it is not surprising that 85% were enrolled as part-timers. This compares to 63% of the remaining South Campus students. The Transition Center part-timers are on the average ten years older than their South Campus counterparts, have a higher average GPA, and carry slightly fewer credits.

High School of Origin. Only 43% of Transition Center students were graduates of Florida high schools (compared to 66% of other South Campus students). A comparable proportion were either GED recipients or

graduates of non-Florida U.S. high schools (46% combined). In contrast, only 8% of other South Campus students were GED recipients and 13% were graduates of non-Florida U.S. high schools (21% combined). It is interesting to note that for both the Transition Center and other South Campus students, graduates of non-Florida U.S. high schools were the oldest students, had the highest GPA's, and registered for the fewest credits.

GPA Ranges. Since the Transition Center serves an older student population, academic performance (as measured by GPA) of the group is of interest. Slightly more than one fifth of the Transition Center students (23%) had GPA's of 3.50 or above compared to 11% of the remaining South Campus students. The Transition Center students in this GPA range carried the same average credit load as their South Campus counterparts, but were almost ten years older on the average. On the low end of the GPA range, 23% of Transition Center students had GPA's below 2.00. This is similar to the 20% of other South Campus students in this low range.

Ethnic-Gender. Almost 60% of Transition Center students were white non-Hispanic compared to 34% of the remaining South Campus students. Forty-eight percent were white females, a much higher proportion than that found in the other South Campus enrollment (19% white females). Considering gender separately, 77% of Transition Center students were female compared to 55% of the remaining South Campus students. Since the Center serves older students, a separate analysis of South Campus students over 30 years old was done for comparison. The data revealed that the older student population on South Campus had an ethnic/gender mix more like that found at the Center. Specifically, 50% of the older students were white non-Hispanic, 34% were white females, and 69% were females.

Enrollment Code. Only 7% of the students advised by the Transition Center during the period preceding the Fall Term registered as first-time-in-college. This compares to 21% of other South Campus students. Thirty-nine percent of Transition Center students had previous college experience and enrolled as either transfers or as former Miami-Dade students (10% and 29% respectively). This compares to only 13% of other South Campus students. Clearly the older population served by the Center was more likely

to have had some college experience, albeit not recent experience. Finally, 54% of Transition Center students and 66% of other South Campus students registered as continuing on from a previous term.

Degree Declarations. Transition Center students declared themselves degree seekers in about the same proportion as other South Campus students (84% vs. 86%). Thus it is not the case that these older students are simply taking credit courses for personal interest. The most popular program declarations for Transition Center students were pre-Bachelor of Arts (23%), Business Administration-A.A. (17%) and Elementary Teaching-A.A. (8%). In the remaining South Campus population the proportions for these same three programs were 8%, 18%, and 3% respectively.

Summary.

Transition Center students are on the average 10 years older than the remaining South Campus population. Sixty percent of the group was over 30 years old, and 28% was over 40 years old. Academic performance of these older Transition Center students was competitive with other South Campus students. Their mean grade point average was higher (2.68 vs. 2.61 for other South Campus students), although a slightly greater proportion had GPA's below 2.00. The Transition Center population is heavily weighted toward females (77%), and white non-Hispanics (60%). This weighting also occurs in the remaining South Campus older population, although not to the same extent.

Less than half of Transition Center students were graduates of Florida high schools, and almost a fifth (17%) were GED recipients. Most (93%) had prior postsecondary educational experience, and 83% had that experience at Miami-Dade (54% Continuing students, 29% Former students). The majority of Transition Center students were enrolled on a part-time basis (85%) and were working toward an Associate in Arts degree (84%).

Table 1

Summary of Data From Transition Center Study

Demographics	Transition Center Students (N=211)				Other South Campus Students (N=19,592)			
		Means				Means		
	Percent	Credits	GPA	Age	Percent	Credits	GPA	Age
Age:								
20 or younger	6	10.4	2.69	-	44	11.0	2.44	-
21-30	34	7.2	2.38	-	42	8.0	2.45	-
31-40	32	6.8	2.69	-	9	6.1	2.84	-
41-50	21	6.7	3.06	-	4	5.5	3.07	-
51 and older	7	6.1	3.02	-	1	5.0	3.08	-
Full/Part-Time Status:								
Full-Time	15	13.6	3.11	30.8	37	13.4	2.59	20.7
Part-Time	85	6.0	2.60	35.1	63	6.5	2.48	25.5
High School of Origin:								
Florida	43	7.4	2.49	29.8	66	9.3	2.44	21.7
Other U.S.	29	6.5	3.18	39.8	13	7.6	2.76	28.3
GED	17	7.2	2.39	33.0	8	8.4	2.46	25.5
Foreign	11	6.9	2.82	38.8	12	9.5	2.71	27.8
Citizenship Status:								
U.S. Citizen	86	7.1	2.71	34.9	70	8.8	2.51	23.7
Non-Resident Alien	12	7.7	2.51	32.6	20	8.7	2.50	24.1
Refugee	1	5.0	2.06	21.5	4	9.0	2.44	24.3
Visa	1	6.0	2.61	28.5	6	12.2	2.60	22.5
GPA Ranges:								
<2.00	23	6.3	1.49	31.1	20	8.5	1.45	22.5
2.00-2.99	37	7.1	2.47	31.6	52	8.9	2.45	23.8
3.00-3.49	16	7.3	3.18	35.2	17	8.8	3.17	25.6
3.50 or Above	23	8.1	3.84	38.3	11	8.1	3.77	28.9

Table 1
(continued)

Summary of Data From Transition Center Study

Demographics	Transition Center Students (N=211)				Other South Campus Students (N=19,592)			
		Means				Means		
	Percent	Credits	GPA	Age	Percent	Credits	GPA	Age
Ethnic/Gender:								
White Female	48	7.2	2.92	36.8	19	8.2	2.74	25.9
Hispanic Female	25	6.9	2.54	34.1	31	9.0	2.52	23.3
Black Female	3	6.0	1.93	30.7	3	8.8	2.35	24.9
(Females)	(77)	7.0	2.77	35.7	(55)	8.7	2.59	24.4
White Male	11	7.6	2.33	31.4	15	8.9	2.52	23.9
Hispanic Male	9	6.4	2.33	28.0	26	9.6	2.37	22.3
Black Male	2	9.0	2.27	33.6	2	9.5	2.28	23.4
(Males)	(23)	7.4	2.36	30.4	(45)	9.4	2.42	23.0
Enrollment Code:								
Continuing	54	7.4	2.76	34.0	66	8.9	2.52	23.9
Former	29	6.7	2.46	33.1	8	6.1	2.48	28.8
Transfer	10	7.0	3.24	39.6	5	8.2	2.40	27.3
First-Time-in-College	7	7.2	-	38.0	21	10.7	-	20.3
Degree Declarations:								
A.A.	70	7.6	2.72	33.7	74	9.7	2.45	22.2
Non-Degree	16	6.3	2.66	36.5	14	5.9	2.86	29.7
A.S.	12	5.8	2.60	34.4	10	8.4	2.54	25.8
P.C.	2	4.3	1.88	42.5	1	6.4	2.81	32.6
A.G.S.	0	-	-	-	1	10.2	2.22	22.5
Summary	100	7.1	2.68	34.4	100	9.0	2.51	23.7

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